

Senate Bill 309  
February 17, 2015  
Presented by Paul Sihler  
Senate Fish and Game Committee

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, for the record my name is Paul Sihler and I am the Chief of Operations for Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). I stand in support of SB 309.

SB 309 would expand the scope of the current Unlocking State Lands program to add federal lands administered by the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management. This program is jointly administered by FWP and the Department of Revenue. Under the current program, landowners who provide access across their private land to state land are eligible for a \$500 state tax credit for each qualified access, up to a maximum of a \$2,000 credit annually. To date, two landowners have enrolled a total of four parcels in the program.

The changes proposed by Senator Hinkle in HB 309 are a logical extension of the existing program, and create the opportunity for additional access to public land.

If you have questions about how the program is administered, Alan Charles, the manager of the program, is with me today.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today and FWP requests a "Do Pass" on SB 309.